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ADDRESS

OF THE

HON. JAMES RITCHIE, MAYOR,

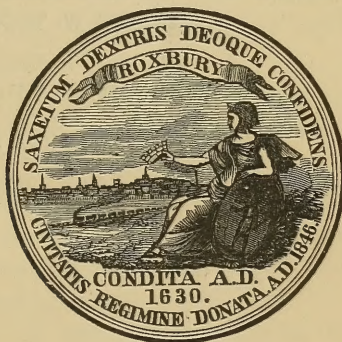
TO THE

CITY COUNCIL OF ROXBURY,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWO BRANCHES IN CONVENTION,

JANUARY 1ST, 1855.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

ROXBURY:
NORFOLK COUNTY JOURNAL PRESS.
1855.

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CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, January 1, 1855.

ORDERED, That the Address of His Honor the Mayor, delivered this day,
be printed for the use of the City Council.

Sent down for concurrence.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, City Clerk.

IN COMMON COUNCIL, January 1, 1855.

Concurred.

JOSHUA SEAVER, Clerk.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL:

By a provision in our City Charter, it is made one of the duties of the Mayor to communicate to both branches of the City Council such information, and recommend such measures, as, in his opinion, the interests of the City may require.

On this occasion, without entering into details which will be duly submitted in full by the proper officers, I will, in accordance with custom, present an outline of the policy to be recommended.

In reference to our City Debt, now amounting to \$202,265.95, I would recommend that measures be taken for its diminution by the sale of such City property as is not needed for City purposes. This property is confided to our care as a sacred trust. We should take such a course as to its disposal, as common sense would dictate to us in the management of our own estates.

Small as is our debt, compared with the value of our City property and the wealth of our citizens, it is not so small that its diminution is not desirable. There are objects for which a City debt may be advantageously incurred; such as the accomplishment of some great enterprise, which is to benefit posterity even more than ourselves. As a general rule, however, each generation should do its own work and pay for it. Posterity will have

enough to do for itself, without being burdened or hampered by the debts of progenitors.

By a judicious sale of a portion of our City property, and a prompt payment of our obligations as they fall due, united with a proper economy, and a resolution to pay for what we need, our whole debt may readily be extinguished in the year 1864. I shall favor a policy tending to such a result, in the full faith that debts, whether public or private, have in them the seeds of strife and dissension, and are in no way conducive either to public or private virtue, to the interests of individuals, or the welfare of communities.

Many and great improvements have been made during the past year in our streets and sidewalks, and I trust that a similar policy may be continued. There is occasion for much to be done in this regard, and every thing should be done which the public good requires, and the public will, as manifested by its appropriations, demands. When the interests of the City *plainly and clearly* require streets to be made or widened, or other improvements to be effected, the work should be done in no spirit of mean economy, but freely, without delay, and after the best and most approved plan.

Our beautiful Cemetery at Forest Hills has been much improved the past year, and the debt therefor has been diminished about \$4000. At present, the amount of the debt is, in round numbers, \$26,000. Our other Cemeteries, on Warren and Eustis Streets, should not be neglected. They are not in such condition as for the credit of the City might be desired. In such a City as ours, places like these should be well protected, and tastefully ornamented.

The Roxbury Gas Company have laid in our streets about eight miles of pipes, which, during the past week, have been filled with gas that has afforded a remarkably clear and brilliant light for many of our dwellings and shops. Arrangements should be made as soon as possible

for the use of this gas in lighting our streets. A well-lighted City is always attractive, not only by its appearance but by the security it affords to property and life.

The Fire Department deserves your attention. The value of this, rightly conducted, is greater than can easily be estimated. Exposed, as are our firemen, at all seasons and hours, without expectation of pecuniary recompense, to save the lives and property of our citizens, they are entitled to great consideration and high regard. All their proper and reasonable requests, either for the improvement of their engines, or, in any way, to facilitate their operations, should meet with a prompt and cordial response. It should be our pleasure, as it is our duty, to lighten their labors, and encourage and promote their generous enthusiasm.

The Police Department is one of very great importance, and its proper organization and efficient action have an intimate relation to the good order and welfare of the community. It is very desirable that justice should be administered with becoming dignity. Offenders against the laws should feel an awe of a court, and an assurance that impartial justice will be meted out to them. Police officers should have an abiding consciousness of their responsibility to a court, whose decisions will be similar from week to week, and ever calculated to command their respect. It is important, moreover, that we should be able at once to refer to a record of cases, and have a fixed locality for the trial of offenders. Such a court would give a fairer opportunity for the accused, and prevent the possibility of many serious abuses. Such courts have been established, with good results, in most of the cities and large towns of this Commonwealth. I recommend an early application to our Legislature for an act to establish a Police Court in Roxbury.

The office of a City Marshal, or of a Chief of Police, seems to me an essential one to the due regulation and

efficiency of our police department. Such an officer is recognized in very many of our ordinances; and I would recommend to the consideration of the City Government the early enactment of an ordinance, authorizing the appointment and prescribing the duties of a City Marshal or Chief of Police.

I would also call the attention of the City Council to the subject of remuneration to police officers for their services. In my opinion, this should be fixed at a reasonable rate, and not fluctuate with the number of arrests, or the amount of fees. Police officers should be definitely and adequately remunerated for their arduous and, oftentimes, dangerous services, and all fees should be paid into the Treasury.

I commend this whole matter to your serious attention, and trust that it will be considered and decided upon its merits, and whatever your decision may be as to the organization of our police department, you may be assured that I shall do the best I can to promote its efficiency and usefulness.

In enforcing the laws it is especially incumbent upon us, as guardians of the public welfare, to direct our efforts steadily and resolutely in that line in which seems to lie the moral and social good of the community. The general sentiment of this City is clearly opposed to dram shops and drinking saloons, and demands that every possible effort should be made for their suppression. Much was done, in this respect, by my predecessor previous to the decision of the Supreme Court against the fourteenth section of the statute. That decision seems, in some degree, to have paralyzed effort, and given boldness and confidence to the violators of law. Still the public good so manifestly demands the enforcement of the law against tippling shops, that every practicable endeavor should be made to give efficiency to its provisions.

A suitable establishment for the maintenance of our poor will require your consideration. The State Pauper

law has caused the removal of most of our paupers from Brook Farm to Bridgewater. Not more than one-tenth of the usual complement has been left. The removal of these from an institution at a distance from the City to a nearer locality, seems desirable both on account of convenience and expense. The cost of maintaining the poor for the coming year will, under any probable circumstances, be greatly diminished.

A generous care for the poor is a duty and an honor; and I feel confident that the Board of Overseers will do all that an enlightened and liberal humanity demands.

The present season is one of peculiar distress, and it is our duty to mitigate the sufferings of the poor by every reasonable provision. The want of employment is very great. It fortunately happens that we may advantageously, in Roxbury, do something, in part, to meet this want. We shall require a large quantity of broken stone, next spring, to be used on our streets. There is a ledge on the Highland Street estate, which can be removed with great benefit to the property. The stone is hard, and admirably adapted for road building. The employment of a number of our distressed people on this ledge, would profit the city in various ways. There are, too, streets to be raised and filling in to be done, which might be put under contract now at much lower rates than in summer, and would give employment to men and teams. By well-timed expedients of this nature, we can do more for the poor, and for the general good, than by the establishment of many gratuitous soup depots, or the bestowal of abundant alms. I would recommend the immediate adoption of some such measure as has been named, for the benefit of the unemployed, and for the interest of the City.

During the past year large expenditures have been made for the accommodation of our Schools, and much credit is due to the past School Committee and City Council for the promptitude with which they have met the public wants.

No outlay for school buildings will probably be required the present year, and perhaps not for several years. Some permanent provision for the establishment of evening schools, for those who cannot avail themselves of the advantages of our day schools, ought to be made, and I trust that, during the present year, this matter may receive careful attention.

The whole theory of our schools is very admirable. Practically there is need of great care in establishing and maintaining the truest and best relations between the several grades. In teaching, thoroughness is the great requisite. The pupil of the Primary School should be thoroughly trained to a certain point before admission into the Grammar School; and the pupils of the latter should have ensured to them a degree of education suitable for the ordinary business of life, as well as for the advanced course of the Latin or High School. It should be always borne in mind that many scholars will go no farther than the Grammar School, and that a certain completeness of training must be had there.

An extended and thorough education should be the ambition of every pupil; for it opens the way to honorable and useful situations, and inspires our youth with nobler aims and aspirations. Our Grammar schools should kindle this ambition, and should be tested, as to usefulness, by the practical business men they furnish, and the number of scholars, *thoroughly prepared*, transferred from them to the Latin and High schools.

Our High School for Girls, one of the first in this region, gives us an enviable pre-eminence. This promises to supply the best education freely to those prepared for it, and will in time furnish many good teachers for our schools, and for those in this vicinity.

Every thing that will add efficiency to our system of education, should receive full and prompt encouragement. Should our Committee urge the advantages of establishing

a Superintendent of Schools, I trust they will be carefully and favorably considered.

Most of us have never before been connected with the administration of municipal affairs in this City, and are wholly uncommitted by the acts of our predecessors, and prepared to consult for the present and future welfare of the City, regardless how our acts may reflect upon those of past governments. The old questions and prejudices, former methods of procedure, and courses of policy are to be our teachers, not our masters, conveying lessons, but not dictating lines of action. There are advantages as well as evils incident to a change in the managers of municipal affairs. Our duty is to shape our acts by the immutable principles of right, to seize upon the advantages of our position, and carefully and prudently avoid its evils. Harmony of action is essential to efficiency in government; and harmony of action can only result from mutual deference and forbearance. We have sworn to consult for the public good. Whatever comes before us is to be considered solely in reference to its bearing upon the general interests, unaffected by our individual prejudices. We have assumed solemn responsibilities this day. We shall all be held answerable for the measures adopted or rejected. In proposing any policy of action, or any particular measure, I shall use my best judgment, with no intention or desire of pressing it, unduly, upon your acceptance; but ever with the hope that it will be thoroughly examined and criticised, and with the determination, in a spirit of courtesy, and with respectful deference, to regard your decision as the calm and deliberate policy of the City Government, which it is my bounden duty faithfully to carry forward and execute;—and may God bless our deliberations, and cause them to eventuate in the promotion of the best good and highest interests of the City.

